

Reflection on the Fourth Sunday of Lent (A)

First Reading: 1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

Psalm 23

Second Reading: Ephesians 5:8-14

Gospel: John 9:1-41

In my younger years I grew up in the west part of Lancaster near the city. One of the roads I used frequently was the Rohrerstown Road near St. Leo's Church. If you ever traveled that road, you would know that it is extremely busy, and to make it worse, there is a train track close to the intersection of Rohrerstown Road and Marietta Avenue. When the train came through, big gates with flashing lights would drop down and the traffic came to sudden halt! Then I would say "Nooooo!" (hopefully) not the train! Not now! I'm already late! (surprise, surprise). My "busy" life came to a screeching halt. Nothing, nothing could cross the tracks, not even big trucks, fire trucks, police cars, ambulances and even my car! After all, "I had very important places to be, and very important things to do." (yeah right)

In a way, that's where we find ourselves now; stuck behind the railroad gates waiting for the train to go by. There is nothing we can do but wait and pray that the train will soon pass. We are told we can't go to school, work, church, family gatherings, see our aging relatives or even go to sporting events or play sports! Now you know, it is a huge shut-down when sports are canceled! (I'm being sarcastic, kind of). So, what do we do?

First, we have to obey the railroad crossing sign! STOP, LOOK, LISTEN. If we don't STOP, we will get run over by the Coronavirus Train. People don't like to be told to STOP, especially Americans. We are all about go, go, go. We take pride in that, but there are downsides to go, go, go. We can overlook the most important people and things in our life, especially God, spouse, family, friends and neighbors. There are many horrible things about this virus, such as people dying, suffering directly or indirectly and many losing their jobs. We need to continue to pray for all of them. So, what do we do? Maybe God is trying to tell us to put on the brakes and STOP. Just STOP running around from one thing to another.

Second, we need to LOOK. Now that we are STOPPED, we can LOOK around and assess our situation. Maybe LOOK back and ask the question, "Is this really necessary?" What do we need to cut out so we can spend more time with God, family, friends and neighbors? This STOP in our lives really shows us who and what is important.

Third, we need to LISTEN. Take the time to stop and LISTEN to God. We are good at telling God what he should do, and how things should go in our life. Shouldn't we stop and LISTEN first, and then do what he says? It is also a good time to stop and LISTEN to our spouse, kids, loved ones, friends and neighbors.

Hopefully, as we contemplate about what and how we are doing, we can follow what St. Paul says today, "Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord." Most of us have some time now to learn what God has in mind for us. St. Paul goes on and says let us not take part in fruitless works of darkness. May Jesus' purifying light expose any virus in us whether it is Coronavirus, or any other physical, psychological, emotional or evil "virus". We need to STOP, LOOK and LISTEN for the Lord.

So, when the gates lift in front of us and the train goes by, and it will go by, we will hopefully go to the other side of the tracks with a new vision or "aha" moment. We can take a new road with God, spouse, family, and loved ones in our car! Maybe we will be able to relate to what the blind man said in the Gospel of John today, "One thing I know is that I was blind and now I see."

Can't wait to see all of you on the other side of the tracks. In the meantime, stay safe – STOP, LOOK, LISTEN. If you are in the "car" waiting for the train to go by, feel free to call me or email me. Would love to hear from you. Also, look on our website frequently for prayers and updates – www.stcatherineville.com

May our prayer be: Lord, heal all those infected with the Coronavirus directly or indirectly, and by your healing Light, **AWAKEN** us to trust you and follow you all the days of our lives. Amen!

God bless,

Fr. Mark Speitel